

LIBERTY ADVOCATE.

"Liberty and Union, Now and Forever, One and Inseparable."

VOLUME 11.

LIBERTY, MISSISSIPPI, SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 1846.

NUMBER 2.

THE LIBERTY ADVOCATE,

IS PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY BY

AUGUSTUS W. FORSYTHE.

TERMS.—Three Dollars if paid in advance, or Five Dollars at the end of the year.

ADVERTISEMENTS inserted at One Dollar per square, (ten lines or less) for the first insertion, and Fifty Cents a square for each continuance. All advertisements not marked with the number of insertions, will be published till forbid, and charged accordingly. Payment to be made when the advertisement is left for insertion, or on demand.

Announcing candidates for State, District or County offices, ten dollars each, payable in advance.

Professional cards, of either the legal or medical professions, merchants, mechanics, or others, not exceeding ten lines, will be inserted one year for fifteen dollars.

Mechanics, merchants and others, advertising by the year, will be allowed the space of sixty lines, renewable at pleasure for twenty dollars.

Election tickets printed at the rate of three dollars per hundred, and payment required invariably on their delivery.

Articles of a personal nature, whenever admitted, will be charged at the rate of Two Dollars for every ten lines, for each insertion, and payment required in advance.

SPEECH OF MR. SPEIGHT,

OF MISSISSIPPI,

In Senate, January 29, 1846, on the bill providing for the augmentation of the Navy.

Mr. SPEIGHT being entitled to the floor, addressed the Senate as follows:

Mr. President: In the discussions which have taken place during the present session (and which, by a kind of fatality, seem to have taken the same direction,) I have occupied but little or no part of your time. I have not remained silent because I did not think that, to some small extent, I comprehended the merits of the great questions of the day, or that I was entirely ignorant of its practical effects on the great mass of the community, but mainly because it was my misfortune to differ with some of those with whom it has long been my pleasure to act.

I did not, nor do I now, believe that the proper time for action has arrived. But though I feel physically unable to do justice to the subject which now engages the attention of the Senate, I cannot any longer consent to remain silent, because I feel that it is due to my constituents that they should know the reasons governing me in the vote I intend giving, and my knowledge of their intelligence and patriotism assures me that they will truly appreciate a course which sound democratic doctrine would seem so distinctly to mark out for the action of this House.

Without further remark, I proceed to the provisions of this bill. And, what does it propose? In the first place, the President is authorized to build ten steamships of iron, and to fit out and call into actual service the remainder of the vessels in ordinary, if, in his judgment, it may be deemed necessary. And what is the amount of money that is proposed to be appropriated by your votes to the accomplishment of this object? Why a sum between six and seven millions of dollars? The honorable senator from Indiana, (Mr. HANNEGAN,) brings for an amendment adding to this already enormous sum, an additional two millions! This, with the annual expenditures for the Navy Department, swells the appropriation to above fourteen millions of dollars!—Yes, sir, in a time of profound peace, when, I undertake to say, not a shadow of war hangs over our heads—when the horizon is unobscured by a single cloud, we are called on to vote fourteen millions of dollars for one branch of the public service.

Now, Mr. President, it may not be altogether unprofitable to look a little into past expenditures. You will not be surprised, because it must be known to you—that this sum of money is almost double the annual expenditures of the government for any one year up to the declaration of the last war. Here, under a democratic administration, pledged to a system of rigid economy—most especially in its monetary affairs—we are called upon to expend at a single dash, and for the support of but one branch of the national defence, a larger sum of money—double the amount—than the whole expenditures of the government prior to the war of 1812. I have a statistical list before me which shows that even these outlays were larger than were required during most of the years up to 1831 and 1832. Yes, sir, many of those years the amount of money required to defray the ordinary expenses of the government was less than that now asked for the support of the Navy by this bill. Here Mr. S. went into an extended review of the expenditures of the government for a series of years past.

This bill (said Mr. S.) presents itself to our consideration in two prominent aspects. We are to consider it first as a PEACE MEASURE, and, secondly, as a WAR MEASURE. If we are really at peace with the

whole world, there can be no argument to support so extraordinary an outlay; and the bill becomes at once an extravagant and wasteful expenditure of the people's money, and one which they will never justify or tolerate. The honorable senator from Missouri, [Mr. BENTON,] when speaking the other day upon this branch of the subject, adverted to what is matter of history, that six years ago a powerful party was overthrown and turned out of power under a charge that this government could be administered for thirteen millions of dollars. Yes, sir, that very party to which the gentleman and myself belong—that party to which a majority of this body belongs—was turned out of power because the expenditures of the government had swollen up to an amount which was regarded by another portion of the community as extravagant. But this is not all. I desire to call the attention of gentlemen back to a period more remote in our political history. I would go back to the period when Mr. Jefferson came into power; and upon an examination of the political records of that day, it will be found that the principal charges brought against the administration then in power, was an extravagant expenditure of the public money; and in that extravagant expenditure, one of the main items was for an increase of the navy—an unnecessary increase, and one imposing oppressive taxation upon people. This, I say, is a matter of history. It is a matter of record that the second administration—I allude to the administration of the elder Adams—was turned out of power, and one of the principal causes of that event was the indignation of the people of this country against the large increase of the expenditures of the naval portion of the national defence. Well; what was that effect? Well, what was the effect? Mr. Jefferson came into power, and established what is known as the gun-boat system—the weakest and least effective system that could probably be devised; and yet, such was and have been the prejudices of the people against a large naval armament, that they absolutely tolerated that departure from the principles of a national defence never before adopted in warfare by any civilized nation on the face of the globe. I would not detract from the virtues of that great man who gave them existence; and it is due to him on this occasion to say that his plans of defence were never fully carried out.

Well, we need not stop our enquiries here. Let us come to the year 1823, when the second Adams was removed from power. I have some recollections of the events of those days. I was then a young man, just entering upon the stage of life, and partook, with lively interest, in the great political drama then transpiring around me. I recollect distinctly—and I call upon the elder members of this body to bear testimony to its truth—that one of the principal charges brought against that administration, was an extravagant expenditure of money. The charge however just or ungenerous, was over and over again reiterated, as well in the public prints as in the primary assemblies of the people—those grand arteries of republican government which animate and control all our national schemes, both before and after they shall have been devised in these halls. The republican creed—the republican doctrine laid down at that day was, that the government could be efficiently administered for twelve millions of dollars; and when General Jackson came into power he was pledged, so far as in his power, to administer the government for that sum of money. If this is democratic doctrine, I ask the honorable senator from Maine, (Mr. FAIRFIELD,) under what pretext he comes forward at a time, as I before said, of profound peace, and asks his party, who stand pledged to administer the government economically, to vote (I say nothing now of the amendment of the honorable Senator from Indiana) some twelve or fourteen millions of dollars, FOR THE AUGMENTATION OF THE U. S. NAVY? I ask that senator if he supposes that public opinion in this country will tolerate such lavish and inordinate expenditures of the public money? Does he expect, if this course of policy be adopted, that the people will sustain an administration avowedly the offspring and guardian of the masses, and which cannot spend one dollar without drawing from their pockets? I must confess, sir, that in view of those striking facts in our political history to which I have called your attention, and which should serve as a guide to every prudent administration, I was shocked at the idea that a proposal should be made at this time, and by a prominent member of my own party, to increase the current expenses of the naval department. I ask, sir, why it is that the people of this country have always raised their voice against extraordinary expenditures in this arm of the national defence? We were very correctly told the other day, by the distinguished gentleman from Missouri—

that when you build a ship of war, you have just laid the foundation of its cost to the nation. I am not prepared to go into a statement of facts and figures on this point, and cannot, at this moment, say in what length of time the expense of a ship afloat equals the cost of construction. It cannot be but a few years. How natural, then, that the people of this country should look with a jealous eye to the expenditure of money for this branch of the public service, not only because it imposes heavy burdens upon their industry—not only because it draws our citizens from peaceful pursuits, and creates fresh pensioners upon those in our country who do its labor—pensioners who are to wear our clothes and eat our food—but because, when the burden is once created, there it remains; it is fixed upon our shoulders. The ships are built—the men are enlisted to command them—and the generation of to day, at least must, succumb to the tribute, whatever it may, that we shall impose upon them.

I feel it to be my duty, Mr. President, while on this branch of the subject, to say one word in relation to the manner in which taxes are levied upon the people, not only for this arm of the defence, but for all branches of the public service. As in all other Governments, there has been, and is in this, A TAX PAYING and TAX RECEIVING portion of the community. In all countries, and most especially in ours, the line of separation between these classes is marked and distinct. And I say here, in my place, that the annals of history, and the records of nations, may be turned over, and there is not to be found upon the face of the globe so unequal, so unjust, so oppressive a system of taxation as that to which this republican government resorts for the purpose of extracting money from the people to support it in its extravagance. It is felt—severely felt—by the people of all our agricultural States—by that sturdy yeomanry of the land whose blows in war have saved our country from its enemies with their armies of veteran soldiers, reared on the fields of a hundred mighty battles—saved us, too, without inflicting upon the nation the evils of such a tribute as this in time of peace. I again assert that it is quite natural that the people should look with keen jealousy to the expenditures of this government, and that they should require strict accountability of those who control its expenditures. The people, let me add, have ever been found willing to contribute the liberal sums whenever convinced that the exigencies of the government, its honor, or its welfare demanded it. But, at the same time, they always have protested against a wild and unnecessary expenditure of the public money. And why? does not every gentleman within the sound of my voice know that it is perfectly absurd to talk here of bringing the expenses of the government to a low standard unless the expenditures be reduced? If you go on maintaining a large standing army, building a great navy, and carrying out a splendid system of internal improvements, every man of common sense must know that a system of taxation equivalent to this must be kept up. The money must be extracted from their pockets and wrung from their hard earnings. The enormities of the tariff held up in one hand, and this bill in the other, presents a beautiful figure of consistency for the anti-tariff men! I have alluded but incidentally to this subject. If it were a proper moment, I would pursue the argument a step or two further. I would endeavor to draw aside the curtain still further that now shrouds the golden sources of your armies and navies. I would show you with what propriety these appropriations for presenting to the world a splendid spectacle of national defence may be urged by individuals who, unlike my constituents, are not taxed to raise the money. But to proceed, as I wish to observe the utmost brevity, I ask if, as a peace measure, the appropriation called for in this bill is requisite for the protection of our commerce? That is the question: for if we are to have peace, take it for granted that the most fastidious gentleman here who is pleading for the extension of the navy, will agree with me that any further than a necessity may exist for the protection of our commerce from piracies on the high seas, no augmentation of the navy is demanded. It was stated by the honorable senator from Missouri, that upon the Mediterranean—that great sea of thieves and pirates—our ships and commerce at this time are as safe as in the Chesapeake bay. We hear of no piracies on the high seas; and why? The world is at peace, and each civilized nation is co-operating for the common protection of the property and vessels of all from the horrid acts of the pirates. Hence it is, in this glorious era of peace and civilization, that a crime the most aggravated that can be committed against the law of nations, has almost ceased on every sea.

But, Mr. President, if it becomes absolutely necessary that this augmentation of the navy should take place, would the author of the bill now before the Senate, with the view to afford adequate protection to our commerce, send his war steamers to the Mediterranean, or to the Pacific, or any distant sea? I ask him if he is not aware that such vessels can be of no utility, except in the protection of the coasting trade? The aid of steam is an important auxiliary of our national defences when properly applied. Should we be so unfortunate as to be involved in a war—which God in his infinite mercy prevent—this description of vessels would be admirably adapted for the defence of the coast and harbors. But I suppose no man acquainted with maritime affairs will say that such vessels are intended to traverse the ocean, there to meet an enemy, and fight the battles of the country. Such a class of vessels of war is no improvement on our former system of naval warfare, any further than the defence of the coast is concerned. The old system has existed from time immemorial, and you must preserve it, for the obvious reason, that fuel and subsistence, sufficient for more than a month, cannot be carried in a steamer.

And now, sir, if my strength will permit me, I think I shall be able to show conclusively that in the present relations of this country with the world, there is no probability of a war. And if I do so I think my honorable friend from Maine will at once abandon his project; that he will, to use a familiar expression, "acknowledge the corn," and permit this bill to lie upon the table.

I proceed then to consider this subject in the second view I have proposed taking of it, and that as a WAR MEASURE. It is not my purpose to take up the Oregon question, and discuss the various points at issue between the two powers. I will defer that for a more auspicious period. But I suppose it will be proper for me to advert to the causes which have been represented as likely to produce a war. As far as my observation extends, there are only two cases of difficulty existing in our foreign relations likely to lead to an open rupture. I refer to our unsettled difficulties with Mexico and Great Britain. I shall now briefly examine these cases. 1st as to Mexico. The difference between Mexico and this country grows out of the annexation of Texas; and it is said that recent events indicate very clearly that Mexico is determined to assume a hostile attitude towards this nation. For my part, I must confess, that, after a very careful consideration of the subject I have not been able to discern the slightest cause of apprehension. I do not regard the recent revolution in Mexico as at all indicating an intention on the part of that country to declare war against the United States. It is one of those ebullitions of popular feeling which happen every three or six months. Perhaps the next mail will tell us of the dethronement of the present military usurper, and the establishment of another. But, seriously, are there any causes of war with Mexico? What national faith or law of comity has the United States violated to incite Mexico to war with us? Is it possible that gentlemen will stand up here and say that Mexico is so blind to her own interests; that she will be guided by such consummate folly as to declare war against the U. S. on account of the annexation of Texas?—the annexation of a territory acknowledged by the most civilized nations of world to be free and independent, and as such, have in their intercourse respect of an equal? It appears ridiculous for so grave and enlightened a body to ascertain the idea. But if I thought there was the remotest probability of war with Mexico, I would not adopt a doubtful or undetermined policy. I would meet her threats or menaces, not probably with the same sense of wounded honor, but with the same unyielding determination to resist them, as I would the threats and menaces of any other nation.

Mr. President, it is not my intention to enter into a debate on the annexation of Texas to the United States; but, sir, I must be permitted to observe, that in the consummation of that act, we only acquired what was of right our own, and what was our just due. We, sir, drew back to our arms a child which, by a ruthless hand, had been torn from our embraces. Texas was our legitimate offspring. She came to us, and threw herself into our arms, and desired a reunion with us. She owed no allegiance to the government of Santa Ana. She never acknowledged his sovereign authority over her. How then can it be said that, in acquiring that territory by treaty, (as I propose to acquire Oregon,) we have violated any of the rights of Mexico, when her sovereign had acknowledged her independence?

I waive further remark here to examine more probable grounds of rupture in the external policy of our country. And

now, Mr. President, let us direct our attention to our relations with Great Britain. It is said, and has been frequently repeated upon this floor, and must confess that I have heard it with pain, that we are on the brink of war with Great Britain. Is this true? I put it to the good sense of senators, and I ask them to answer the question. Has anything occurred on the part of Great Britain—any thing in the complexion of the recent news from that country—indicating a warlike feeling towards the United States? Is it not directly the reverse?

If senators will regard the question with calmness and dispassion, throwing aside those heated feelings and impulsive determinations which temporary excitement may have aroused in the mind, I feel perfectly satisfied that they will find the path to honorable and peaceful settlement of the Oregon question yet unobstructed by Great Britain. The late news from England is of a pacific nature. Failure on the part of Lord John Russell to form a cabinet arose from the fact that he was about to place Lord Palmerston at the head of the department of foreign affairs. Palmerston, it is well known, entertained hostile feelings towards this country, and stood fully committed on the Oregon question. On that very ground, Lord Grey refused to go into the cabinet. Well, does all this prove nothing? Are gentlemen so blind, so eager and thirsty after war, that they can shut their eyes to events so significant as these? I must confess that I was rejoiced when I heard the intelligence to which I have alluded—when I saw that the whig ministry, as it is called, fail to form a cabinet, and on the grounds which I have stated; and particularly was I rejoiced at the suppressed tone of the British press. I consoled myself with the reflection, that, so far as Great Britain played her part, there was but little or no prospect of a war. Let me tell senators that I am as much opposed to crouching to the British lion as any of them, and am as resolutely determined to maintain at all hazards our rights; and when I am assured of their violation, will be prompt and ready to vindicate them as becomes the standing and character of this great nation. Not only would I vote a declaration of war, but millions upon millions to defend an insulted right. But I take this occasion to say, in my place, that I am a peace man. I am for peace if it can be honorably maintained, and no vote of mine shall ever be given on this floor tending to countenance an unnecessary war. Gentlemen may talk lightly of this thing called war. It is a fine theme for oratorical display. It is a capital subject for rhetorical effort. But to the millions from whom taxes are wrung to support war, it is a matter of very different import. I feel it my duty to protect the rights of the tax-payers, and if no higher consideration influenced me, it would be sufficient that these tax-payers have stood by me at the ballot box—have clothed me with their power, and reposed in me their responsibilities.

The people, Mr. President, whom I have the honor to represent will never consent to measure our national honor by dollars and cents. Yet, sir, if I know that people, they are equally opposed to an appeal to arms to adjust and settle our difficulties with foreign nations, when the same can be accomplished by peaceful and honorable negotiation. No honest man can be so blind as to desire war, with all its calamities, if it can be honorably avoided. Sir, your President is not for war; he is for peace, as his whole conduct in this transaction proves. He has offered the most liberal terms of compromise, which I hope may yet be accepted to. I go for sustaining him in his efforts to settle this controversy.

But let us examine this question a little further. It is said, Mr. President, as I before remarked, that we are to have a war with Great Britain to settle our rights in the Oregon territory, and where is it? As I am not speaking particularly to you but through the senate to my constituents, I will refer to the geographical portion of this territory. It is a strip of land lying between the Rocky mountains and the Pacific ocean, and extending from latitude 42 degrees 40 minutes; being distant some three thousand miles from the United States. Well this territory is supposed to be ours. Has Great Britain marched a military force there and taken possession of it? Has she forcibly expelled our citizens residing there? Are scenes of carnage and blood enacted there? Has Great Britain protested against our rights in Oregon or their enjoyment? No.—You are now enjoying in common, and in joint occupancy with Great Britain, those rights which never, up to the year 1840, were asserted as exclusively belonging to the United States. In 1818, when the convention was held which stipulated to hold this territory in joint occupancy, we are told (I have the paper before me) by one